

CHAPTER 4: STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction

At the end of each test, students completed a brief questionnaire on their reactions to the test and their plans for high school and beyond. We examined the responses to these questions for three groups of students:

- Ninth grade students who took the exam the first time in 2001
- Tenth grade students who took the exam for the first time in 2002
- Students who failed the exam in 2001 and took the exam for the second time in 2002. We had two sets of survey responses for these students:
 - Responses in 2001
 - Responses in 2002.

In this chapter we present the responses of the students, including a comparison across these cohorts. The comparison of 2001 and 2002 responses for the two-time test takers, in particular, may indicate shifts that can be attributed in part to the requirement to pass the CAHSEE in order to graduate from high school.

Survey Items

The student survey contained eight questions:

- Question 1. How did you prepare for this test? (Check all that apply.)
- A. A teacher or counselor told me about the purpose and importance of the test.
 - B. I practiced on a sample of the test.
 - C. A teacher spent time in class getting me ready to take the test.
 - D. I did not do anything to prepare for this test.
- Question 2. How important is this test to you?
- A. Very important
 - B. Somewhat important
 - C. Not important
- Question 3. Do you think you will graduate from high school?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Not sure
- Question 4. Will it be harder to graduate if you have to pass a test like this?
- A. Yes, a lot harder
 - B. Somewhat harder
 - C. Not much harder at all
 - D. I really don't know.

Question 5: What do you think you will do after high school?

- A. I will join the military.
- B. I will go to community college.
- C. I will go to a 4-year college or university.
- D. I will go to vocational/technical/trade school.
- E. I will work full-time.
- F. I really don't know what I will do after high school.

Question 6: How sure are you about what you will do after high school?

- A. Very sure
- B. Somewhat sure
- C. Not sure at all

Question 7: How well did you do on this test?

- A. I did as well as I could.
- B. I did not do as well as I could have.

Question 8: The main reasons I did not do as well on this test as I could have are (mark all that apply):

- A. I was too nervous to do as well as I could.
- B. I was not motivated to do well.
- C. I did not have time to do as well as I could.
- D. There are questions on this test that cover topics I was never taught.
- E. There are questions on this test that cover topics I was taught, but I did not remember how to answer them.
- F. There were other reasons why I did not do as well as I could.

Findings

Number of Respondents

Table 4.1 indicates the number of respondents in each of the test cohort groups. Classification of a 2002 examinee as a “first-time” or a “repeater” was based on self-report. Students who did not say whether they took the test in 2001 or who did not answer the questionnaire were excluded from analysis. In particular, this latter constraint resulted in the exclusion of many ELA examinees who did not complete the second constructed-response item and never reached the questionnaire. Also, students who claimed to be repeaters but could not be matched in the 2001 database were excluded.

TABLE 4.1 Number of Respondents to the Student Questionnaire After Taking Test in Different Cohorts

Test/Cohort	All 2001 Students	First-time 2002	Repeaters 2001 and 2002
ELA	269,843	61,005	32,633
MATH	312,597	77,288	87,718

Test Preparation

Question 1 asked the students how they prepared for the exam. Responses after taking the ELA test and the math test are presented in Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2, respectively. The

figures show that more than one third of the respondents indicated they did not do anything to prepare for the test. A larger percentage of students reported they were told the purpose and importance of the test in 2001 than in 2002. This might reflect that a lot of students already knew the importance and purpose of the test in 2002 from other sources. A higher percentage of students who did not pass the test last year and had to retake it this year reported having teachers' help in the classroom to prepare the test, compared to all the test takers in 2001 and the group of students who took the test for the first time in 2002.

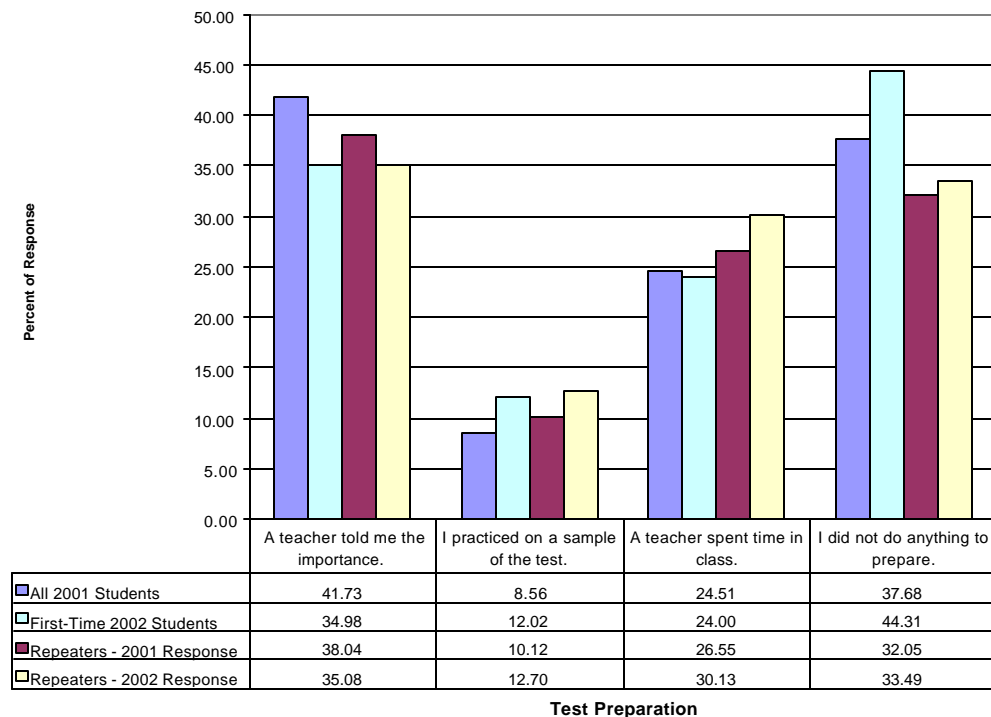


Figure 4.1. Different cohorts' responses to Question 1 after taking the ELA test.

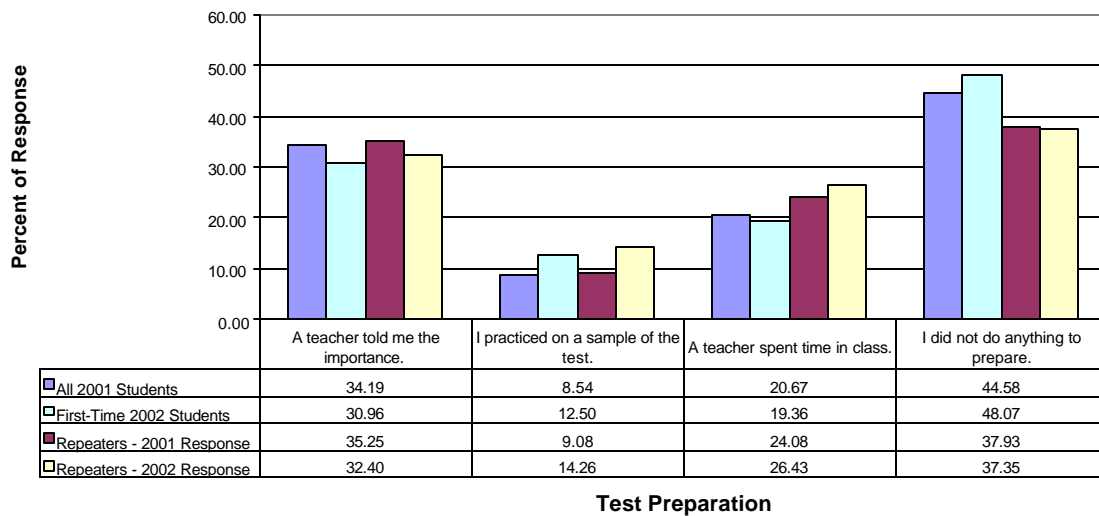


Figure 4.2. Different cohorts' responses to Question 1 after taking the math test.

Importance of the test

Question 2 asked students if they felt the test was important to them. Responses to the question from different cohorts after the ELA test and after the math test are presented in Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4, respectively. Generally, a majority of students believed the test was "very important" to them. Comparatively, a larger percentage of students who had to retake the test this year perceived the test as important to them than the overall group of students who took the test in 2001 or who took the test for the first time in 2002. In general, more students reported that they considered the test important in 2002 than reported this perception in 2001. In every cohort, fewer White students perceived the test as important than other ethnic groups (including Asian, African American, and Hispanic). The gap between White and other ethnic groups was at least 5 percentage points. English learners perceived the test to be more important than all other groups of students, suggesting that language fluency might be an important factor in determining students' perceptions of the importance of the test to them.

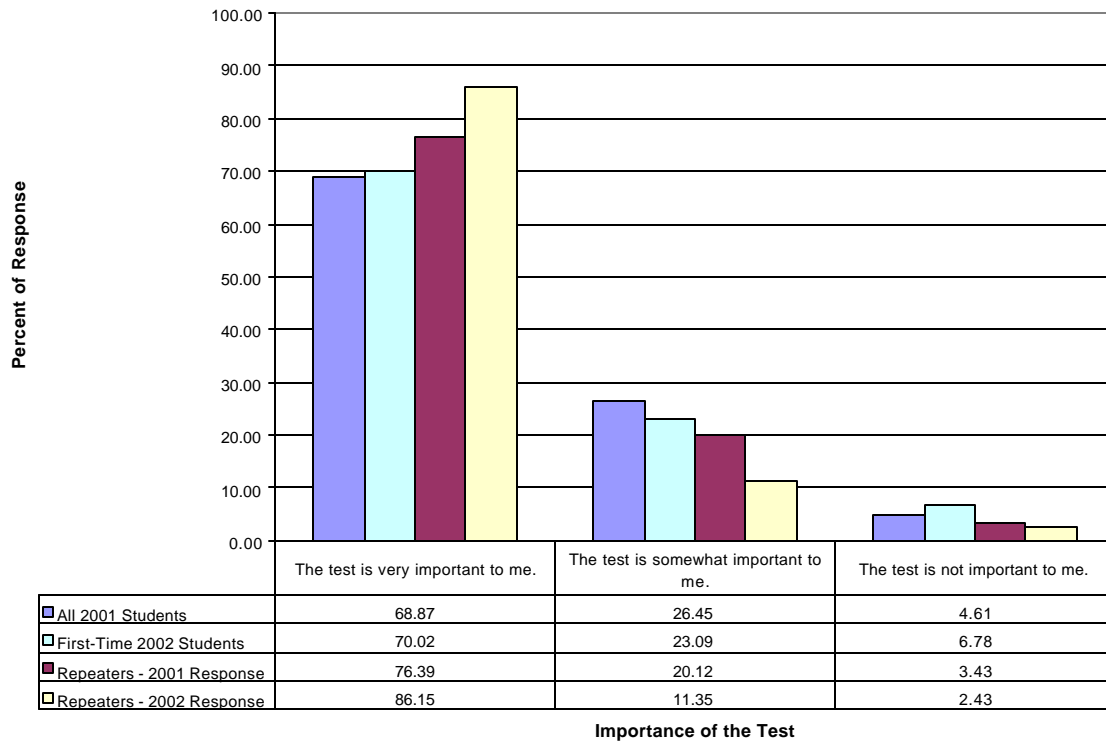


Figure 4.3. Different cohorts' responses to Question 2 after taking the ELA test.

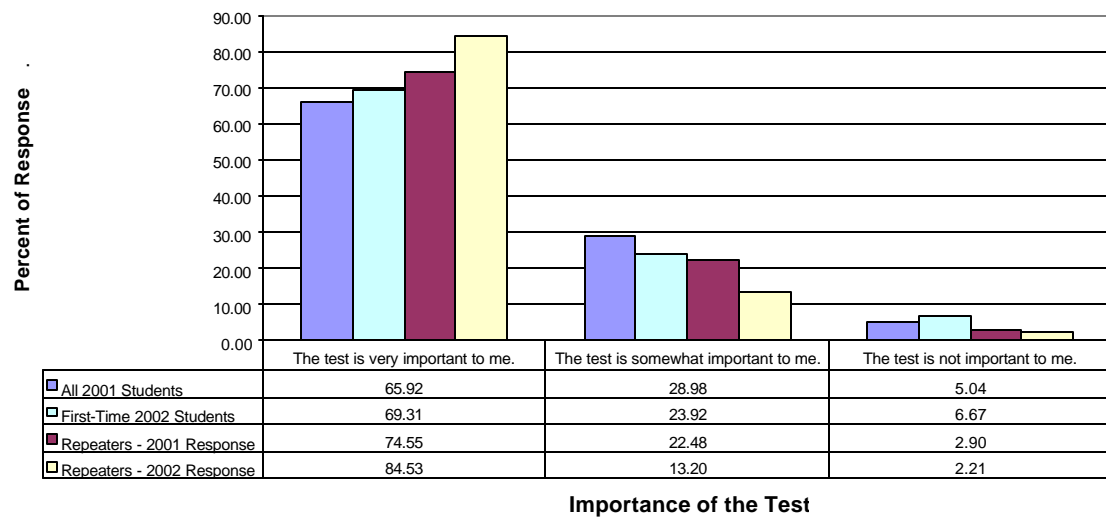


Figure 4.4. Different cohorts' responses to Question 2 after taking the math test.

Plans for High School and Beyond

Question 3 asked students how sure they were that they would graduate from high school. Responses to this question from all cohorts after the ELA test are presented in Figure 4.5 and to the math test in Figure 4.6. More than 70 percent of students in all cohorts believed that they would graduate from high school. Generally speaking, students who had to retake the

test in 2002 were not as optimistic as the overall group of students who took the test in 2001 and those who took the test for the first time in 2002. The 2002 repeat test takers reported a lower percentage of “I will graduate from high school” and a slightly higher proportion of “not sure if I can graduate from high school,” compared to first-time test takers.

Among the four ethnic groups, Asian and Hispanic students had lower percentages of students reporting, “I will graduate from high school” than African American and White students. This trend was consistent across cohorts. Among disadvantaged groups, English learners and special needs students consistently showed the lowest percentage of students responding, “I will graduate from high school.” Comparatively, students who were categorized as “redesignated fluent English proficient” (RFEP) were more optimistic about their potential to graduate from high school.

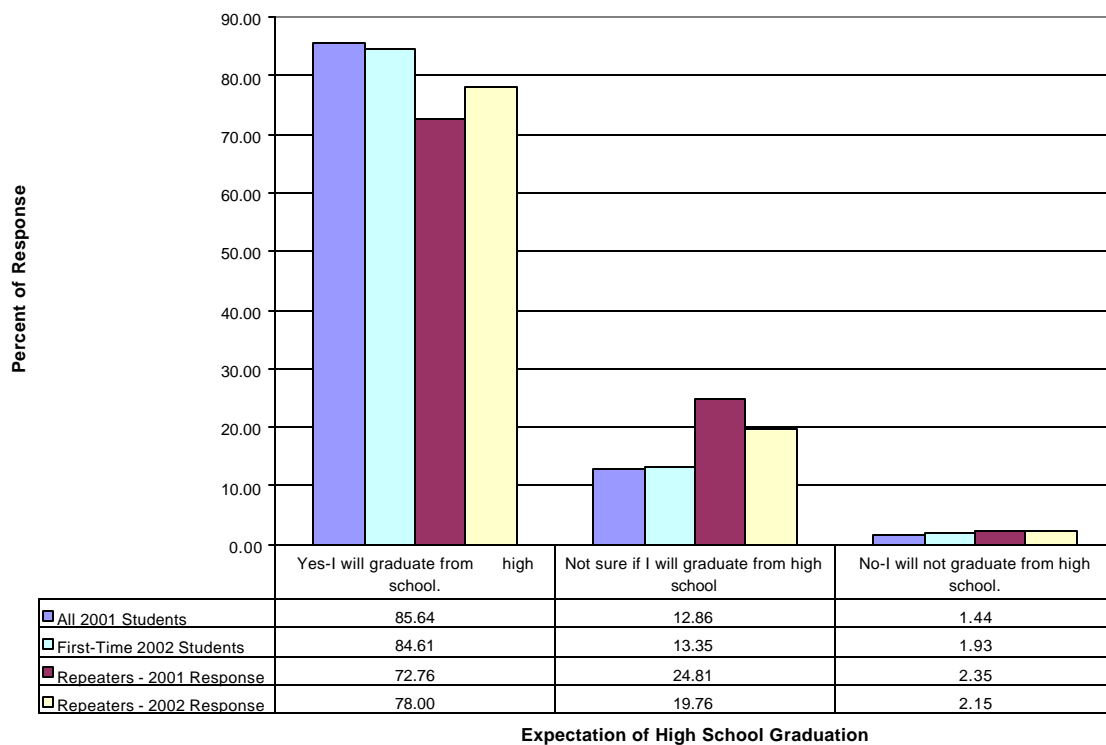


Figure 4.5. Different cohorts’ responses to Question 3 after taking the ELA test.

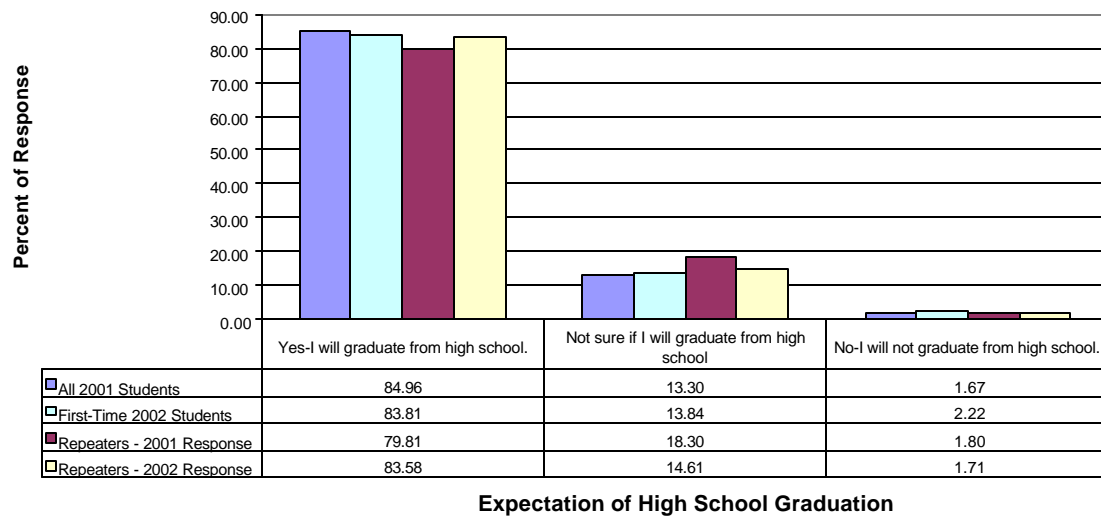


Figure 4.6. Different cohorts’ responses to Question 3 after taking the math test.

Question 4 asked students if they believed the requirement to pass a test such as the CAHSEE would make it harder to graduate from high school. Responses from the four cohorts to this question after the ELA test and the math test are presented in Figure 4.7 and Figure 4.8, respectively. Compared to all test takers in 2001 and students who took the test for the first time in 2002, students who took the test in both 2001 and 2002 were more likely to report that being required to pass a test like this would make their graduation from high school “a lot harder.”

A comparison among the four ethnic groups consistently found that Asian and Hispanic students were more likely to report they expected it would be “a lot harder” to graduate if they had to pass a test like the CAHSEE than were African American and White students. Although large proportions of all disadvantaged groups perceived that passing a test like this would make it more difficult to graduate, English learners and students with special needs were most likely to report this concern.

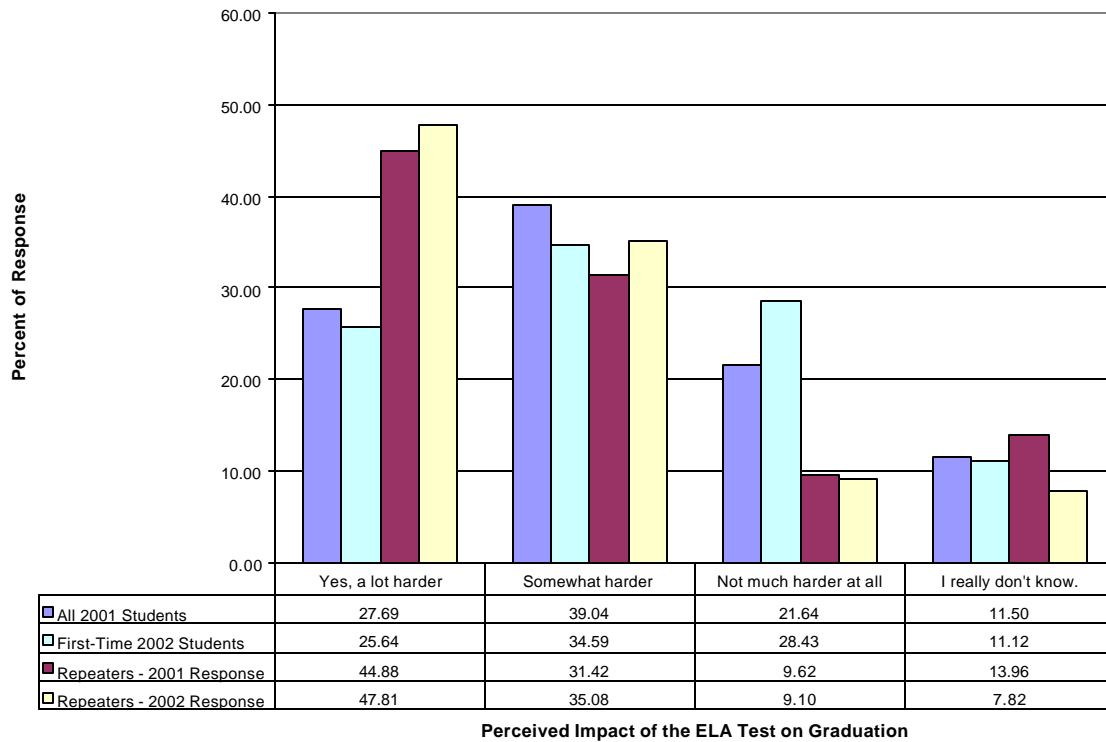


Figure 4.7. Different cohorts' responses to Question 4 after taking the ELA test.

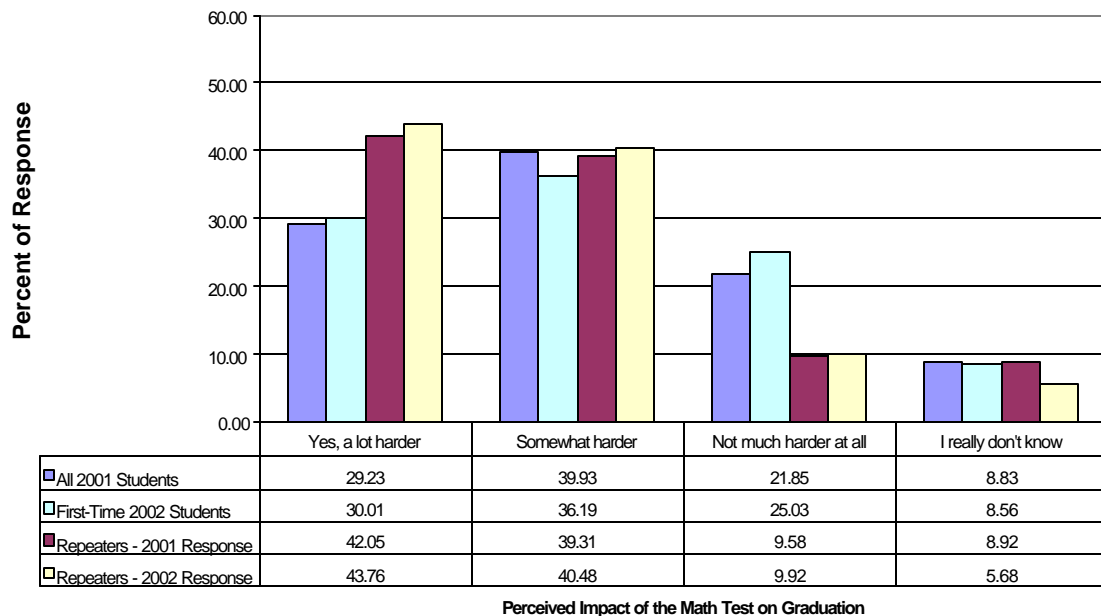


Figure 4.8. Different cohorts' responses to Question 4 after taking the math test.

Question 5 asked students about their after-high-school plans. The results (see Figure 4.9 and Figure 4.10) showed that, generally, more students who took the test in 2001 responded that they planned to go to a 4-year college or university and fewer of them responded that

they planned to attend a community college than had the cohorts in 2002. Students who took the test in 2001 and repeated it in 2002 showed less confidence that they would attend a 4-year college or university after high school than did the other two cohorts, particularly those who had to repeat the ELA test.

A comparison of ethnic groups consistently showed that a higher percentage of Asian students planned to go to a 4-year college or university, followed by African American and White students. Hispanic students reported the lowest percentage planning to go to a 4-year college or university. Relative to RFEP students, fewer English learners said they planned to attend a 4-year college or university after high school.

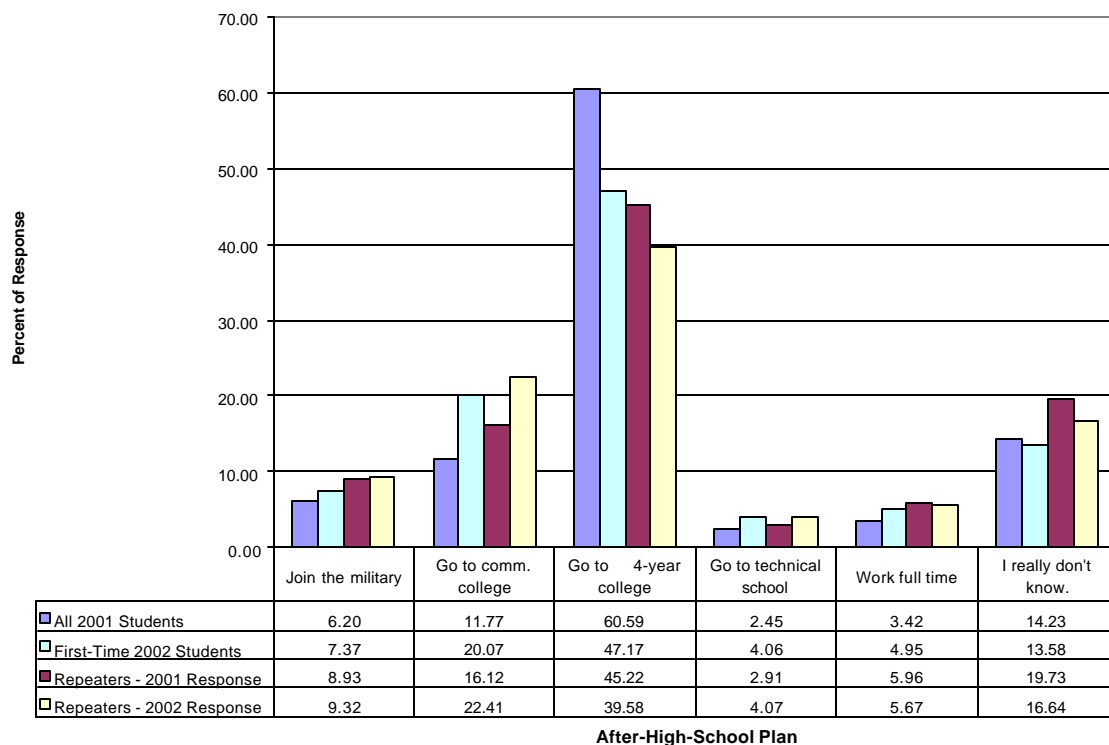


Figure 4.9. Different cohorts' responses to Question 5 after taking the ELA test.

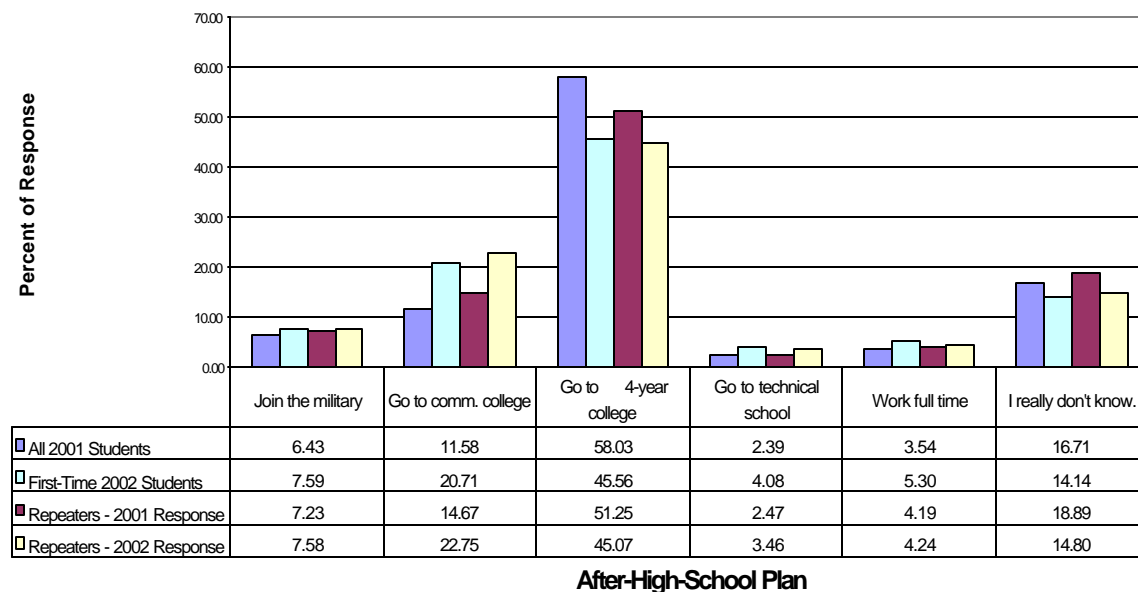


Figure 4.10. Different Cohorts' Responses to Question 5 after taking the math test.

Question 6 asked students how sure they were about what they would do after high school. An overwhelming majority of students reported that they were “very sure” or “somewhat sure” about what they would do after high school. There was not much difference in the level of certainty about what they would do after graduating from high school among different cohorts. Students who took the test in 2001 as 9th graders and again in 2002 as 10th graders showed a slightly higher level of certainty about their future in 2002 after taking the test a second time; they were also less sure of their future than the other cohorts of students who responded.

A comparison among different demographic groups found that African American students were most likely to report that they were “very sure” about what they would do after high school. English learners and students with special needs reported the lowest level of certainty about what they would do after high school. Students who took the test in 2001 as 9th graders and repeated it in 2002 as 10th graders showed a slightly higher level of certainty about their future in the 2002 survey than they did in 2001; yet their level of certainty remained lower than that of the other cohorts of students.

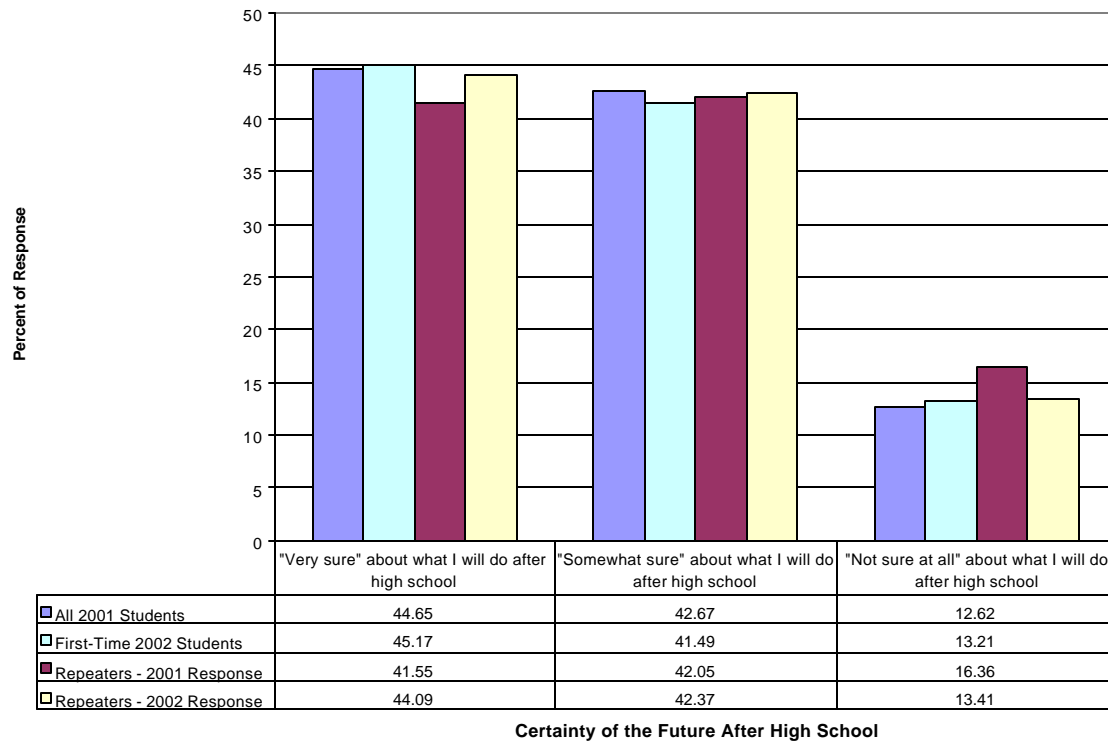


Figure 4.11. Different cohorts' responses to Question 6 after taking the ELA test.

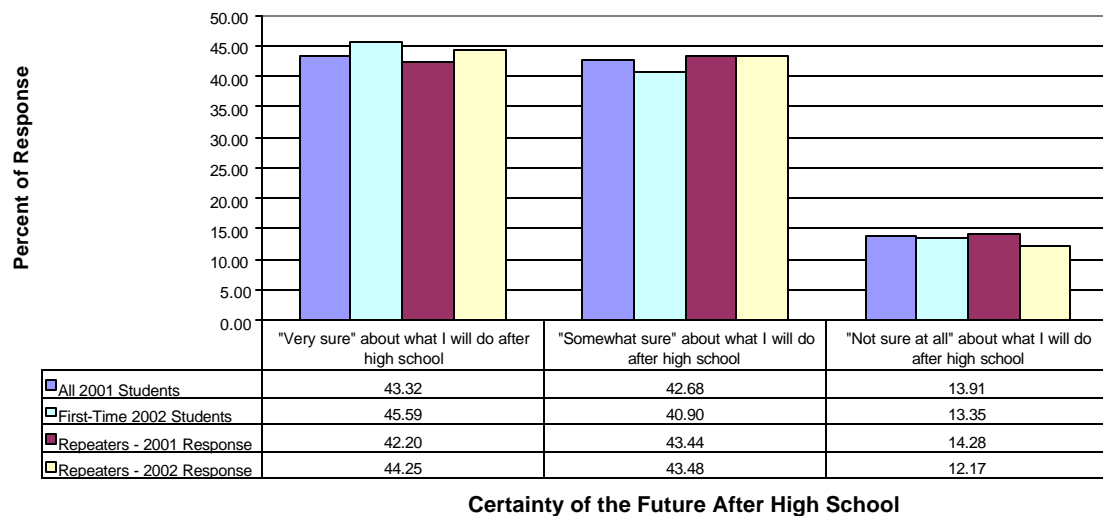


Figure 4.12. Different cohorts' responses to Question 6 after taking the math test.

Perceived Test Performance and Influencing Factors

Question 7 asked students if they performed as well as they could have on the test and Question 8 investigated the factors that affected students' test performance. Results of Question 7 (see Figure 4.13 and Figure 4.14) showed that, overall, about 65 percent or more of respondents felt that they did as well as they could on the test. About 30 percent of

students who took the test twice reported “I did not do as well as I could have” in 2001. This is the highest rate of students reporting perceived inability to perform to the best of their ability among all cohorts.

Results of Question 8 were presented in Figure 4.15 and Figure 4.16. The responses “some topics had not been taught” and “could not remember” were the most often reported explanations for students’ lack of optimal test performance. The percentage reporting, “topics had not been taught” was higher on the math test than on the ELA test. Compared to the overall group of students who took the test in 2001 and those who took the test for the first time in 2002, students who took the test twice were less likely to indicate “not motivated” as a reason for not performing well on the test.

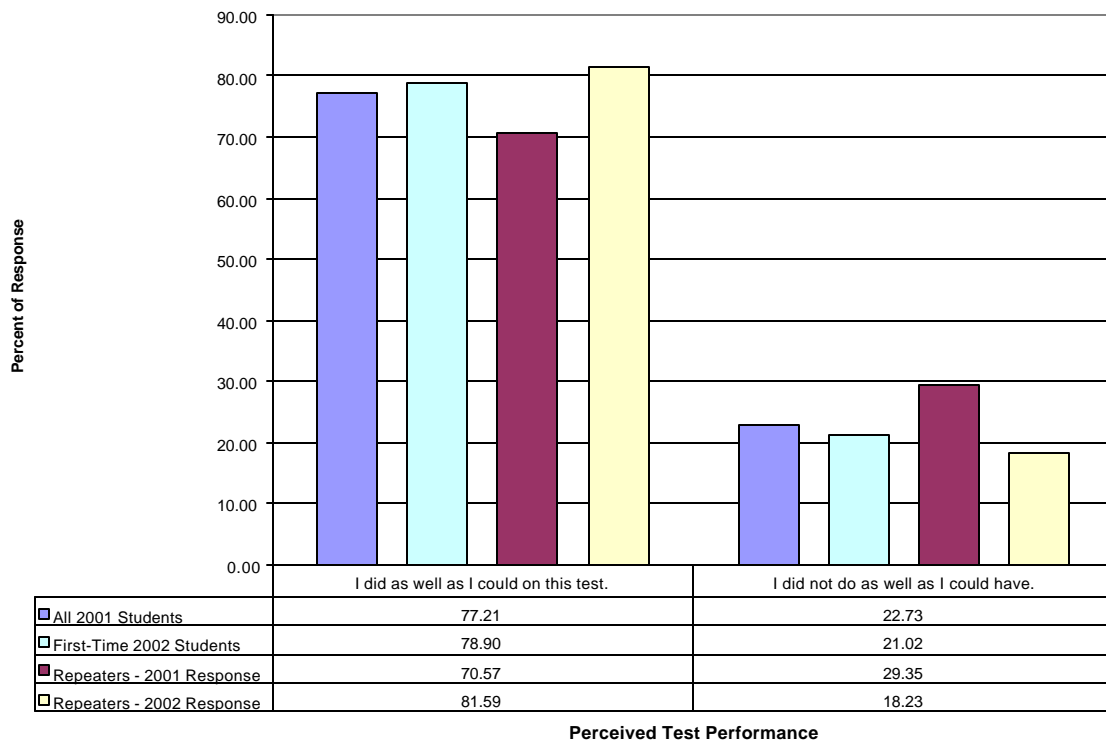


Figure 4.13. Different cohorts’ responses to Question 7 after taking the ELA test.

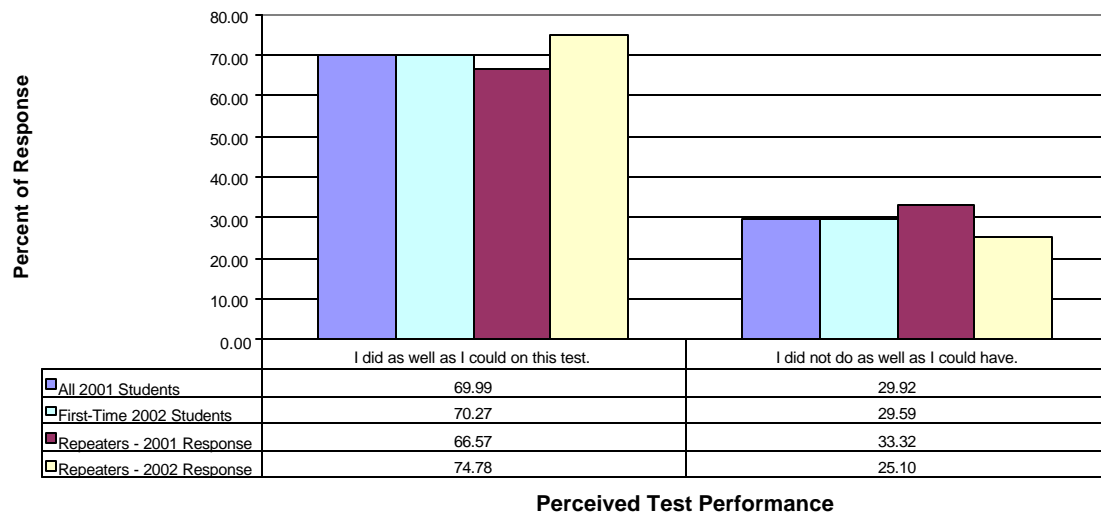


Figure 4.14. Different cohorts' responses to Question 7 after taking the math test.

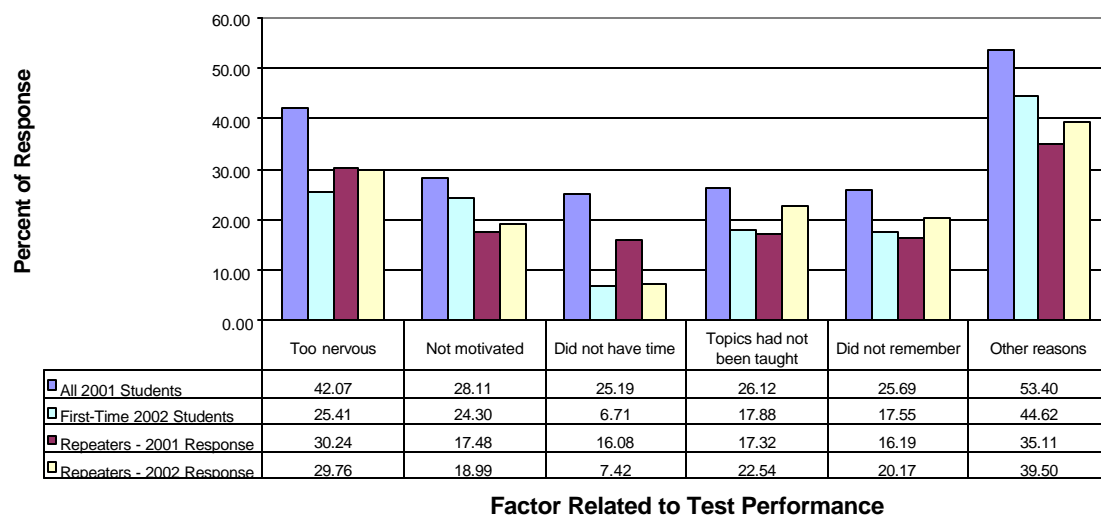


Figure 4.15. Different cohorts of students' responses to Question 8 after taking the ELA test.

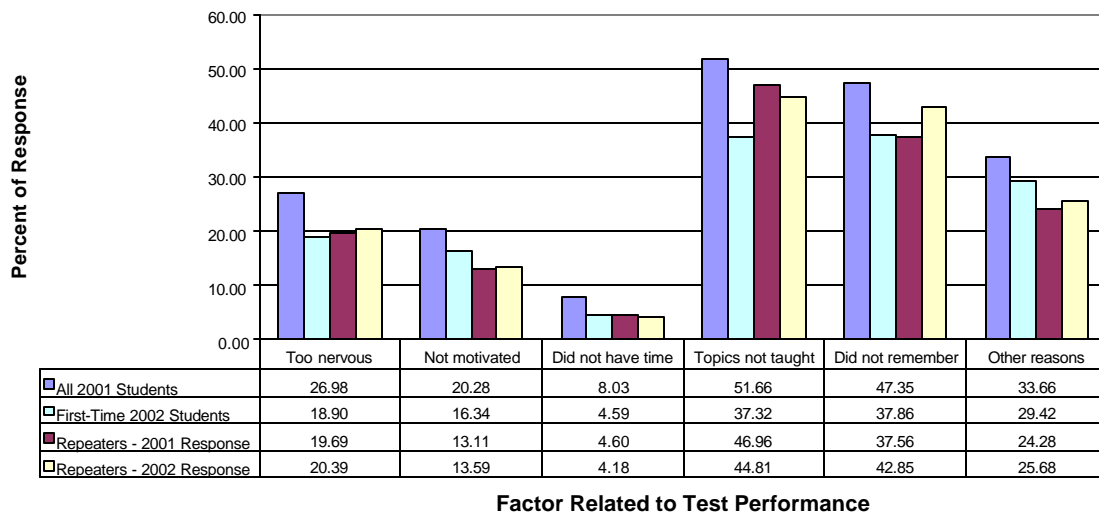


Figure 4.16. Different cohorts of students' responses to Question 8 after taking the math test.

Summary

An overwhelming majority of students thought that the test was very important or somewhat important to them and believed they would graduate from high school. However, more than 50 percent of students indicated that a requirement of passing a test like the CAHSEE would make it “a lot harder” or “somewhat harder” to graduate from high school. Students who took the test twice perceived the test as more challenging than did other cohorts. Overall, about 50 percent of students planned to go to 4-year colleges or universities, but students who took the test twice were less likely to make such plans, according to their reports in 2002. More than 80 percent of students indicated that they were “very sure” or “somewhat sure” about what they would do after high school. A large majority of respondents reported that they did as well as they could on the test. The most common reasons reported for not doing as well as they could were that some topics covered in the test had not been taught and that they could not recall the correct answers.